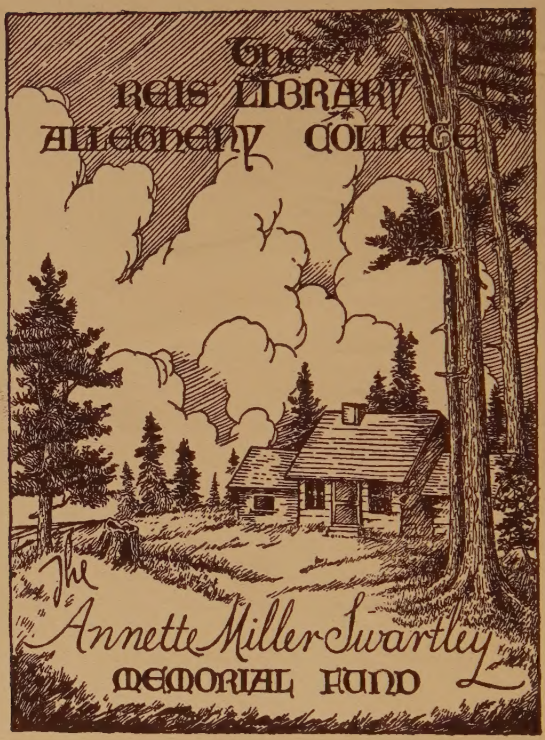
08-BHI-812


THE
REIS LIBRARY
ALLEGHENY COLLEGE
The
Annette Miller Swartley
MEMORIAL FUND

3/-

WITHDRAWN

PIT-HEAD POEMS

FREDERICK C. BODEN

PIT-HEAD POEMS

821
B632p

By

FREDERICK C. BODEN

WITH A PREFACE BY
SIR ARTHUR QUILLER-COUCH

1927
London & Toronto
J. M. DENT & SONS LTD.

All rights reserved

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

PREFACE

The circumstances in which this slender volume was written make it, to my mind, something of a portent. They will be found set forth with a brief account of the author in an introductory note by my friend Mr. Guy N. Pocock, who first brought me the MS.

But I find the volume remarkable—some of it highly remarkable—apart from circumstance; and yet not apart. Circumstance may excite interest (as with Richard Savage or Kirke White) but can only make enduring literature when it has incorporated itself in the writer, as with Bunyan or Burns, writing the prison bars indelibly across the vision or permeating any given verse with the scent of the furrow.

It will be obvious to any reader that Mr. Boden has been learning: that at the pit-head (for example) he has gone to school to Mr. A. E. Housman—who, as I guess, would "escape his own notice" setting up a school thereabouts. But I am mistaken if that verse schooling has repressed the originality which I find so constant, "breaking through" in Mr. Boden's lyrics: and his age is twenty-four.

He has a philosophy, too: and that, after his lyrical gift, is the best of him. Some of us who have outlived our capacity for responding with ease to new verse, while

114515

ALL[illegible] LIBRARY

keeping our delight in the old instruments, and faith that the Muses will yet bring them back to accompany new voices and allure new generations, have proved to ourselves that the old enchantments—say of *The Tempest* or of *Hyperion*—rested, unsurmised by ourselves then, upon a philosophy far deeper than the footprints of elves on yellow sands; that there was always a deep bell, somewhere far down: that

> a deeper import
> Lurked in the legend told our infant years
> Than lies upon that truth we live to learn,

and that, if we elders are to be won from the chimney-corner (in Sidney's phrase), we must be won by undertones of that lost bell.

I believe that any attentive ear can hear these undertones chiming beneath Mr. Boden's lyrics. His *Valley of Humiliation* is not apparently that "best and most fruitful piece of ground in these parts" wherein Bunyan's pilgrims discovered a Shepherd Boy singing, "in very mean cloathes, but of a very fresh and cheerful countenance." This Boy sings from a coal-pit and sings fiercely, demanding air and light. But he sings for those who have ears to hear.

ARTHUR QUILLER-COUCH.

CONTENTS

		PAGE
	PREFACE BY SIR ARTHUR T. QUILLER-COUCH	v
	A NOTE ON THE AUTHOR BY G. N. POCOCK	ix
1.	DREAM NO MORE	1
2.	AUTUMN THOUGHTS	2
3.	OH, ONCE WHEN I WENT COURTING	3
4.	EDITH	5
5.	HADY BELLS	8
6.	SURRENDER	10
7.	LET THEM CLACK	11
8.	BEAUTY	12
9.	THE BELL	13
10.	THE OUTCAST	14
11.	WIND AND RAIN	15
12.	MARY	16
13.	THE LIGHT	17
14.	IN NORMANDY	18
15.	I'LL BRING THEE PEARLS	20
16.	THERE WAS A GIRL	21
17.	THE LOON OF BUTE	23
18.	HOW CAN I SING	25
19.	NELL	26
20.	SEPTEMBER	28
21.	A DREAM	29
22.	MAY DAY	33
23.	FAITH	34
24.	OUT OF THE HEART	35
25.	SPINDLESHANKS	36
26.	THE DREAMER	37

CONTENTS

PAGE

27. I think 'tis Dawn 39
28. When Last I went 40
29. Upon the Moors 42
30. They bade Me go 43
31. The Lad I Loved 44
32. Old Athens 46
33. Between the Derwent and the Dove . . . 48
34. Proem 51
35. How Sick I grow 53
36. Drinking 54
37. In a Derbyshire Garden 55
38. Once when for Me 56
39. Hady Hill 57
40. The Son of Man 59
41. The Murder 61
42. Heigh-ho and Fie 63
43. I came upon Her 65
44. One Summer's Morning 66
45. The Tryst: an Idyll 69
46. Holiday 72
47. Sadness 73
48. The Rose 74
49. Annie 76
50. The Man 77
51. Round the Church 78
52. A Song for Chesterfield 79

FREDERICK C. BODEN

Mr. Boden is a young miner of twenty-four, the son of Mr. Benjamin F. Boden, a goods-porter on the L.M.S. He works at the pit-head, choosing the night-shift which gives him a little time for reading by daylight. He has always lived at Chesterfield. He was born there, went to the Chesterfield Elementary School till the age of thirteen, and then became a miner. At first, he has told me, he had to work for the most part lying on his stomach, stripped to the waist, in underground passages two feet and a half high. He would crawl there all day, a lamp hung round his neck, collecting the coal that was cut out by the man with the pick; and for meals he ate what food he could manage to take down with him. For the last six years he has worked on the surface by night.

A few years at the elementary school, and that was all the formal education Mr. Boden ever had. He was not taught English at all, he says. So far as he knows, none of his relations has any gift for writing. But he has never ceased to educate himself in poetry and philosophy in his scant spare time, spending whatever money he can spare on books of poems and philosophical works. He does not consciously compose his poems while working at the pit-head—but, as he says, at all times and places he feels poetry subconsciously.

A year ago I received two poems from Mr. Boden, and a letter asking for criticism. Should he go on writing, or give it all up? "It is all very perplexing," he wrote, "and troubles me a great deal more than I like to say." I read the poems, and knew them for the real thing. Lovers of poetry will know what is meant by that. I do not mean that they were perfect poems; but I felt then, and I see no reason to change my judgment, that here was a deep sincerity of thought, a sense of the singing word and the magic that is poetry, which I had not often found in the thousand other manuscript poems that had come the editor's way.

I asked for more, and more yet—and received such lovely things as *In Normandy*, *Dream no More*, and *Wind and Rain*. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch read them, and recognising their great merit, offered to write a few lines of introduction should we decide to publish. "And they certainly ought to be published," he said. The poems were submitted to several other persons of sound literary judgment, and my first opinion was more than ever confirmed. It was pointed out that one or two of the earlier poems showed unmistakably the influence of poets whose works Mr. Boden had been studying. This is perfectly true; but these few poems have not been omitted, for to my mind they increase the interest of the book.

Mr. H. N. Brailsford, who was then editing the *New Leader*, was the next to read the poems. He was struck by their power and lyrical beauty, and not only showed the most kind interest, but offered to publish a number of

poems in his paper. This was accordingly done. A dozen or more of Mr. Boden's lyrics have appeared from time to time in the *New Leader* and other periodicals, and in an anthology, *The Best Poems of* 1926.

While one feels that the reception of these first poems has more than justified the publication of this little book, one cannot but be anxious that Mr. Boden's poetry should stand on its own merits, and not attract a mere ephemeral attention from the fact that the author is a young miner. All the same, one must not disregard the conditions under which these poems were written. "Many a time," the author writes, "I come home from work and go straight to bed exhausted, and lie there till it is time for work"; and again, "Oftener than not I'm too tired to write poetry, or for the study such writing entails."

The study he refers to is the reading of philosophy, and its application to the theme he has in mind. For in most of these lyrics there is a definite philosophical or ethical purpose. In such a poem as *In Normandy* this purpose is at once apparent. Of another poem Mr. Boden says in the letter that accompanied it, "The idea at the back of my mind was—Let me show these ignorant ones how beautiful a thing sex can be." Of another (*One Summer's Morning*) he says, "It was my intention to baffle and elude. All about me I see nothing but bafflement and elusiveness. I see life and death. I see how all things are wrapped in mystery, and how a solution of this mystery eludes." Other lyrics are written for those who are made miserable by a wrong-headed religious outlook. Others again are just sheer poetry.

FREDERICK C. BODEN

I once asked Mr. Boden what he wanted to do in life. I think his reply will help the reader to a fuller insight into these poems than any critical preface could give. "The suffering and ignorance I see about me," he wrote, "make my heart ache. I hope to be something of a comforter—something of a saviour." Such an aim in a young poet of twenty-four is good to hear.

G. N. P.

PIT-HEAD POEMS

I. DREAM NO MORE

HAVE patience for awhile, my lad,
Dream no more i' the quiet night,
For ever since the world went mad
Lads have dreamed to set it right,
And there was never one that did.
Such lovely dreams some lads have had,
But all dreams vanish in the light.
—I meant no hurt, lad—love forbid.

Of old a dreamer strove to mend
The mad world's ways with his white hands,
But lo, as every dream does end,
So ended his with lash and brands.
The mad world sat and drank and diced
And, as a dreamer has no friend,
He hung alone above the lands
And dreaming, died; his name was Christ.

When metals, heated, melt and run
Along the narrow, well-worn cast
And some few drops are glowing spun
From some thin crevice in the blast,
The puddler smiles at their escape
And knows their heat will soon be done.
And they lie there and harden fast
As the bright metal moves to shape.

2. AUTUMN THOUGHTS

Now down along each summer lane
The wintry winds begin to blow,
And trees will soon stand bare again
And summer lanes be wrapt in snow.

And in the lodging where I bide
The folk will sit the evenings thro'
Snuffling by the bright fireside
Of things the neighbours say and do.

"Jane's babe is born and serve her right,
Jane was quite old enough to know.
Oh, old Ted Smith was drunk last night"—
And so the fireside talk will go.

But there I have a little room
Where I may flee from such poor fare,
And tho' no fire will light the gloom
Yet I have all the singers there.

They stand together, row on row,
The men that sang for singing's sake,
And I shall sit by candle-glow
And strive to mend the verse I make.

And tho' along each frosty lane
The leaves are scattered far and wide,
Yet spring will soon be here again
And I shall walk the countryside.

3. OH, ONCE WHEN I WENT COURTING

Oh once when I went courting
My sweetheart tossed her head,
And pursed her lips so proudly
And turned to me and said:

"Young men are all for thieving
And no young man speaks true,
And there are tears and grieving
When young men come to woo;

There's sighing and deceiving
And grief and bitter rue,
And there is no believing
What young men say and do."

And so, with cap a-cocking,
I spoke me soft and low,
And how my heart was knocking
My sweetheart did not know.

Oh, how my heart was beating
I dare not tell for pride,
And she strode on, my sweeting,
And I stepped out beside.

Beside my dear a-stalking
With many a sigh and smile,
Along the green fields walking
And over stream and stile.

OH, ONCE WHEN I WENT COURTING

With hand in hand a-linking
All thro' the great, green shire,
Till what my heart was thinking
Burned on my lips like fire.

Then sweetheart-like a-heeding
She harked for pity's sake,
And what my heart was needing
She smiled and bade me take.

Oh, sighing, never speaking,
She smiled as sweet could be,
And what my heart was seeking
My sweetheart gave to me.

4. EDITH

Young Stanley Wilde of Beeley Moor
Went wooing up to old Burt's mill,
Young Stan had loved a score or more
And naught had come of it but ill.

When Molly James had borne him twins
The folk said then Stan should repent,
But Stanley laughed at all his sins
And up to old Burt's mill he went.

Old Thomas Burt, the miller there,
Spent all he earned inside the Earl,
He had one child, a daughter fair,
Edith, a laughing, lovely girl.

And Stan, with wealth and all it gets,
Went lusting up thro' brier and brake,
And old Tom Burt, chin-deep in debts,
Welcomed him for his money's sake.

"Now, Edith lass, Stan's come to woo,
Be kind to him, we're deep in debt,
Be kind or 'twill be worse for you"—
And so the trap was sprung and set.

At Whitsun-time, with Stan beside,
To Curbar church the girl was led,
And Curbar bells, at Whitsuntide,
Rang for sweet Edith, woo'd and wed.

Down in the Earl the fun went free,
And when young Stan strode in the tap
'Twas, "Come up, boys, and drink with me,
Young Stanley Wilde, the married chap.

" Come up, you boys, and get your drinks,
Come up, I leave for home by nine,
Throughout the Peak Stan Wilde's name stinks,
But come up, boys, the drinks are mine."

At Rosehill farm, by nine o'clock,
The supper-table waited Stan;
When Edith heard the yard-gate knock
She ran lightfoot to meet her man.

She ran lightfoot to meet her lord,
" Oh, come, Stan dear, the supper's hot;"
But Stanley eyed the supper-board
With, " What the devil's this you've got?

" Is this the best that you can do?
By God, I've lost my appetite.
I half expected this from you."—
And so passed Edith's wedding-night.

And so passed many dreary weeks,
And Edith's hands grew thin and worn.
The girlhood faded from her cheeks,
And when the babe came 'twas still-born.

Then blinds were drawn up at Rosehill,
And folk sat hushed and solemn-eyed.
And March month brought the daffodil,
And April came, and Edith died.

And Curbar bells at evenfall
Rang out across the moor and wood,
And with the rest, by Curbar wall,
Beneath the spire, a new stone stood.

And all was silent at Rosehill,
And none dare jar a gate or door,
For Stan sat very white and still,
Staring across the dark'ning moor.

5. HADY BELLS

On Hady hill at eventide
The Hady bells ring far and wide.
Across the fields by Spital way
—At evenfall, they sigh and say,

" Sleep sound until the morning light,
'Tis idle, lad, to grieve o' night,
Grief only makes a lad to weep,
Lie down, " say Hady bells, "and sleep."

And Hady bells, that ring at eve,
Bring comfort to the lads that grieve.
And many a lad with troubled breast
Hears Hady bells and turns to rest.

And many a lass who'd lie forlorn
Sleeps soundly till the morrow morn,
And only one by Hady dwells
Who never hears the Hady bells.

And where he lies, by Hady hill,
The bells might just as well be still,
For tho' they sigh and echo so,
He sleeps so sound he does not know.

Oh, he's forgot the grief and rue
And all the shame young men come to,
He has forgot I was his friend
And how our friendship came to end.

He has forgotten what was done,
All good and ill to him are one.
He never now thinks of the harm
That happened up by Froggat's farm.

The moonlit night—Ten-acre land—
His girl and I caught hand in hand,
His angry words—our bitter fight,
He has forgotten that outright.

He has forgotten how we stript
And swung and chopped and cut and clipt.
The clinch—the lucky blow—the fall,
He has forgotten that and all.

It troubles not his quiet sleep
What company his girl may keep,
What fellow walks her, arm in arm,
Along the fields by Froggat's farm.

6. SURRENDER

One said the heart gives not for gold,
The heart, he said, is rich with pride,
A heart cannot be bought or sold:
And I stood by and knew he lied.

A month ago my heart was free
And did not reck what lay in store,
But hunger played a game with me,
And now my heart is mine no more.

For hunger got me in his hold
And led me to the busy mart,
And there men sat behind their gold
And unto them I sold my heart.

O point me out when I go by
A-walking lonely and apart.
O show me to your friends and cry,
"See, that's the one that sold his heart."

7. LET THEM CLACK

Let them clack—'twill soon be ended,
Clack breaks no bones nor rights a wrong.
Nothing said is soonest mended:
Let them clack, 'twill not last long.

'Twas always so; 'mongst hills I knew
Once lived my mate and had his Jill;
He, loving, did what young men do,
And there the folk clacked with a will.

For he was not the one to wed,
And with the morn was up and gone;
And soon the girl was brought to bed,
And so the village clack went on.

But ere spring beflowered the hills
To others there ill fortune came;
And as long tongues love others' ills,
Clean out of mind went my mate's name.

O, trouble rode another's back
And newer mischiefs spread like fire.
And one more trod the lonely track
Across the hills, out of the shire.

8. BEAUTY

When 'tis my good luck to perceive
The beauty hid in blood and bone,
For fear the world will not believe
I dare not make my good luck known.

I tell none why I walk apart,
I say no word and go my way,
And none ask what is in my heart,
And were I asked I dare not say.

And even when my dear 's with me
And comforts me and takes my hand,
I cannot tell her what I see
For fear she will not understand.

And, as we fare, my thought and I,
And never tell what makes us sad,
The folk we know, as we go by,
Stare long at us and think us mad.

9. THE BELL

Merrily once one Christmas morn,
I heard a bell say Christ was born,
And I knew it lied—I knew that bell
Could not speak truth tho' it cracked and fell.

Cruelly once with whip and blade
Christ was murdered ere I was made,
And ever since then, iron and high,
Christmas bells have done naught but lie.

10. THE OUTCAST

Now love lies with his face in the dirt
A-beating his head,
He cries, " I am mortally hurt.
Alas, I am dead."

Then he stubs his small toes on the sod
And 'gins he to plain,
" Oh, they knelt to me once—I was god,
And now I am slain."

And he tears off his quiver and all
And loudly doth rave,
" Now into their vain hearts I will crawl
And dig my own grave."

II. WIND AND RAIN

All the world was as black as a pit,
And the firelight high up the walls 'gan flit.
The wind 'gan howl at the window-pane,
And tap, tap, tap, went the swishing rain;
Tap on the door and tap again,
As tho' it were bidding me open it.

It dripped from lintel and streaming whin,
About the step made a dirty linn.
Louder the wind began to roar,
And harder the rain began to pour.
Tap it went on the creaking door,
Tap it went, but could not get in.

It beat on the roof with a hiss and a hum,
And beat on the door, but I sat dumb.
Never a word from me was won,
Never a bar nor a bolt undone.
Fast enough it should ope for one—
Fast enough, if she would but come.

But the wind and the rain are all I hear,
The wind and the rain, so far and near.
Heavy it falls in lane and lea,
Heavy it falls, and not on me.
Heavy it falls on the old roof-tree,
And heavily, heavily on my dear.

LIBRARY

12. MARY

Inside the Dog at Tutbury
Merrily sang the company,
Merrily old John Winterbottom
And merrily William Edward Cottom,
Merrily Henry Bellamy
And merrily Thomas Higginbottom.

They woke the echoes about the castle,
Woke many a knight and weary vassal,
They woke sweet Betty, Lady of Baunt,
And young de Ferrers and John of Gaunt.
They woke the Knight of the Golden Tassel,
Harry of Repton, Earl of Caunt.

They made a gaffer in Marston quake
And roused the echoes in Sudbury brake,
They woke a hermit down Hilton way
And he thought of Eldon and 'gan to pray.
There was but one whom they could not wake
And that was a lass from Fotheringhay.

Centuries since, when the snow lay deep,
She came from Yorkshire by Lover's Leap—
And they thump the tables with drinking-pots
And sing their ditties, these drunken sots,—
But she lies peacefully, fast asleep,
The lass that was lovely and Queen of Scots.

13. THE LIGHT

I AM the voice of the people,
I was born in the night.
I am the voice of the people,
Of love and love's might.
I am the voice of the people
Demanding the Light.

Behold, I was born of a slave
And none made rejoice,
Nay, none but the two that begot me,
Having no choice.
And I, that was got in the grave,
I am the voice.

I cried thro' the suffering land
And none heard me cry.
All the doors were bolted and barred
As I came by.
But behold, the time is at hand,
The hour is nigh.

Open the miserable doors,
O children of night;
Open the miserable doors,
O heavy of sight.
I say to you, Open the doors,
For I am the Light.

14. IN NORMANDY

In Normandy, at the eventide,
Lovers go wandering, side by side,
Down a lane 'neath an orchard wall,
And dusk steals after them, hiding all.
Long is the lane and long they bide,
In Normandy, at the evenfall.

In Normandy, by that orchard-plot,
A thousand and three lie there and rot.
The Normandy youths go overhead
Each with the lass he hopes to wed.
Softly they go and murmur not,
Scarcely a sound, so soft they tread.

A thousand and three fair loves I had,
And every one was a lovely lad.
Every one was brave and tall,
And true as a lad could be, withal.
Every one with a dream was clad,
And there were stars in the eyes of all.

Every one had a crown to wear,
A queen to get and a purse to share.

Every one had a staff and pack,
But never a guide to show the track.
Never a guide nor a torch was there;
And so of my loves not one came back.

In Normandy, 'neath the apple-trees,
They lie so quiet and take their ease.
Normandy lovers go softly by,
Softly under the evening sky.
And the apple-blossom stirs in the breeze,
In Normandy, where my lovers lie.

15. I'LL BRING THEE PEARLS

"I'LL bring thee pearls wherewith to deck
Thy shining hair and white, sweet neck;
Satin and silk I'll bring to drape
Thy beautiful—thy perfect shape."
So swore the youth and was away
Ere his fair could cry him stay.

The months sped by and were replete
With tales of death and swift defeat,
With tales of sally, hunger, pain,
Of gallant men that died in vain;
And then from open door to door
The happy words, "The war is o'er."

The youth returned—the village street
Rang emptily beneath his feet.
The garden-gate was red with rust,
The staring windows thick with dust.
Beneath the dank, shadowy trees
The tall weeds hid the pied heart's-ease.

16. THERE WAS A GIRL

THERE was a girl who loved me so
That I would sing the whole day long,
With a bo, bo, beedle-um bo,
And this is how I sang my song.

'Tis sweet to love a lassie-O
And when she said there's none but you,
With a bo, bo, beedle-um bo,
I did believe she told me true.

How I loved her nobody knows
For she was sweeter than honey-O,
And she would hark to my song that goes
With a bo, bo, beedle-um bo.

We went a mile and sat by a stile
And picked the moonflowers all a-blow,
Three for a kiss, two for a smile,
And one for a bo, beedle-um bo.

One for love and none for woe
And one for a dimple that I spied,
One for a bo, beedle-um bo,
And one for aught that happed beside.

Then up she got and ran away,
Nor said so much as a beedle-bo;
I looked all night and the next long day,
Looked for her high and looked for her low.

But O, that lassie could not be found,
Search as I would and to and fro,
Search as I would all over the ground,
Call as I could with a beedle-bo.

. . . . .

O, but a girl once loved me so
That I would sing the livelong day,
But I sang too soon with a beedle-bo
And up she got and ran away.

17. THE LOON OF BUTE

O YE who lip the shining flute
And serenade beneath the moon
And wax hot-eyed in love's pursuit
While sweeter pipers stand by mute,
Have ye not heard of that daft loon
Who fluted at the edge of Bute?

He was a fellow with no sense,
He'd flute unto a dirty stick
And leap about a broken fence,
But would not pipe for people's pence.
Ah, when he played the old and sick
Would sit and dream of times gone hence.

He wore a feather in his cap
And, tho' he blew glad air or sad,
Around his ears it then would flap
And at his cheek would lightly rap;
And like a thing that had gone mad
His foot upon the turf would tap.

He'd sit upon a slimy stone
And stare into the dark green sea,
And then a little tune he'd drone
To something that moved there alone;
Then he'd shrill a song of dree
And tear his hair, and sob, and groan.

THE LOON OF BUTE

He said his were the wisest tunes
And sweetest since the world grew old;
He said he'd danced with moon-eyed lunes
Down by the sea among the dunes;
And there, he said, he had been told
Deep-sea ditties and witching runes.

He stood upon the wild sea's rand
And played a tune unto the tide,
The tide came whispering up the sand—
The people staring from the land
Saw it lap gently at his side,
And saw him raise his thin, white hand.

"Go back, O sea," they heard him say,
"Go back, O sea"—and saw him frown;
They saw him strike the swirling spray—
They heard him cry, "I bid thee stay."
They saw him lift his flute and play,
And then the sea came rolling down
And bore him up and far away.

Ay, far away and out of sight
And a shadowy fathom deep.
Never a whisper, day or night,
Never a whisper, dark or light,
Tells of the sea-place he doth keep.
Never a murmur of the wight.

18. HOW CAN I SING?

Loudly the chanticleer now crows,
So loud he makes the morning ring,
He'll wake men up, so hard he blows,
But till he does I cannot sing.

How can I sing while others weep
And groan beneath their travailing,
And cry a god who's fast asleep
And hears them not—how can I sing?

How can I sing when I've no salve
For putrid sore and deadly sting?—
And people sleep in rags and starve
And will not wake—how can I sing?

There's better men alive to-day
Than god or any such poor thing,
And yet the nations rob and slay
And will not cease.—How can I sing?

O chanticleer that sounds the dawn,
Now rouse them with your heralding;
O chanticleer, you bring the morn,
And till you do I cannot sing.

For men sleep sound and would not hear,
And 'twill be vain—my flute-playing;
So sound your note, you chanticleer,
And wake them up that I may sing.

19. NELL

As I went up by Hardwick Park
On Sunday night, when church was o'er,
A dog was howling in the dark
Beside old Peter Hancock's door.

And if I know the tale aright
That I've heard told this many a year,
A dog that howls outside by night
Is warning of ill-luck that's near.

So going up by Hardwick Hall
I thought of Hancock's lass, young Nell,
And mused aghast—Come, after all,
'Tis but a tale old women tell.

'Tis only an old woman's tale,
There's naught to fear—let such things be;
Now come, my lad, what could Nell ail,
The lass that's soon to wed with me?

But sure enough when morning came
The news went round from door to door:
"Nell Hancock's gone—Tom Lowe's his name,"
Tom Lowe, who's rotten to the core.

Oh! there's no comfort to be had
In wishing ill when ill is done,
So take her home and wed her, lad,
And here's luck to the girl you've won.

20. SEPTEMBER

In the middle of September
While there was a love for me,
I thought not on November
Nor thought on dull December,
I did not then remember
September love does flee.

And I went up to Darley
And on to Castleton,
All thro' the bearded barley
And on to sleepy Marley,
Up thro' Little Harley,
And found September gone.

On I went to Bember
And on to old St. Clare,
On to lonely Pember,
On to busy Lember
A-looking for September,
But September was not there.

I only found November
A-sitting in a lea,
And by her side December
Sat grinning at September—
Ah, then did I remember
September love does flee.

21. A DREAM

Upon my friend Death left his mark
And I wept long where none could hark.
All the night I lay awake
Weeping for my dead friend's sake.
All night thro' till morning-break—
Till morn came dimly thro' the dark.

Chill and grey, the dawn grew bright
And filled the room with ghostly light—
With morning mists that seemed to cling
Around many a whispering thing.
But all was still—no whispering—
So still, my heart was filled with fright.

And there I saw beside the bed
A something stood with hooded head;
A tall, black figure, grim and foul,
Watching with a threatening scowl
—Watching me beneath its cowl,
Beside my couch, still as the dead.

Then far away a cock gan hum
And my dry lips were stricken dumb.

And many a cock at hand I heard,
But the tall figure never stirred.
" Come." It whispered that one word.
Softly, clearly, whispered " Come."

" Come." I saw the muffled head bend
And knew 'twas he that took my friend.
" Come." My heart stood still with fear
As the grim figure drew more near.
" Come," it whispered, stern and clear,
" Come." I knew this was the end.

And so the room began to swim
And numbness climb my every limb.
" Come." He put his chilly palm
Tenderly beneath my arm.
" Come." His voice was sweet and calm
And the room faded. All grew dim.

. . . . .

Death is father when life is done,
Father and friend to all and one.
And, as a father, love-beguiled,
Leads the faltering feet of his child,
So death—my father kind and mild—
Led me onward, his new-born son.

Folded close in my father's gown,
Onward over the sleeping town,

A DREAM

Over cities where sad souls lay
Crying aloud for ever and aye,
" Take us, Death, from the world away."
" Ere long " smiled my father, looking down.

Over a home where a nine-month bride
Held babe and husband close to her side.
Many a promise was made by both
Over the babe—and many an oath.
But my father smiled, hearing the troth,
And led me onward with easy stride.

Then came a din and a battle-roar,
Men foolishly shouting o'er and o'er,
And far below they wrestled in strife,
Each one wielding a bloody knife,
Each one seeking the other's life.
" Fools," said my father, and smiled no more.

" O fools," he whispered—I thought he wept,
And deadly sickness upon me crept.
Quiet I lay in the strong embrace
And felt his lips come close to my face.
" Sleep," he murmured, "a little space,
None shall harm thee." Behold, I slept.

As I awoke we topped a hill
Where Christ his people foregathered still.

A DREAM

Christ was there, on that hillside,
And every soul that ever died.
Ah, they were lovely and beautified,
Having found peace and death's goodwill.

And I saw my friend and I was fain
To call to him with my might and main;
But lo, my father's fingers fluttered
Over my lips ere aught was uttered.
" Leave them in peace," he softly muttered,
" And sleep for awhile." I slept again.

. . . . .

Slept and awoke at a trumpet's boom
To find the world was shrouded in gloom.
To feel the arms relax their hold—
To see a glimmer of light and gold—
To turn about and see, as of old,
The sunlight shining along my room.

22. MAY DAY

O HERE's a May Day passing by
And leaving white bloom on the spray,
Leaving mayflowers all to die,
And leaving me to strive and pray.

O shine and shower make may wine
For sweet maybloom that's pure and best,
It slakes the buds that else would pine,
But cannot slake my burning breast.

For in my heart, half marred with blight,
An unblown bud droops thin and wan,
'Tis like to die for warmth and light,
And without hope the May comes on.

How long have I to suffer now?
How long my heart to bleed in song?
How long the thorn about my brow?
How long, O Christ, how long, how long?

23. FAITH

Ye mixed for me the same strong brew
With which the poet Christ ye slew,
But as ye forced the goblet near,
The voice of Christ rang in my ear,
"Have faith, they know not what they do."
I took the goblet—drained it clear.

Ye whipped me thro' the windy town
And mocked me when the blood ran down;
Laughing to see my tears start,
Ye stood me in the filthy mart,
And put a serpent in my gown
And bade it eat into my heart.

Yea, cruel things ye did to see
If ye could kill this faith in me;
Ye called me fool and hung me high,
Sport for every passer-by,
And lo, in spite of all of ye,
The faith burns on and will not die.

24. OUT OF THE HEART

Out of the heart when the task is done,
Out with the lips' last faltering breath
Comes the king, the beautiful one,
Fairest of all, set free by death.

Feeling his feet ruffle each feather,
Nightingales sing as he passes by,
Linnet and lark laugh together,
"Fly with us, king," the swallows cry.

But sadly, busy daylong with baubles,
Men stalk unseeing along the street;
None of them know why the linnet warbles
Nor why the nightingale sings so sweet.

25. SPINDLESHANKS

The swallows have come back again,
The gold is on the daffodils,
The new leaves whisper in the rain
That Maytime's coming down the hills.

The cattle stare from fold and pen,
The starling mocks along the bough,
The cuckoo calls from field and fen,
The lark sings high above the plough.

The throstles from the hedgerows call
To robin in the hawthorn-tree,
But robin gives no ear at all
And cherups on and says to me:

"Young spindleshanks, young dozyhead,
'Tis time you set your heart to rights,
And asked a lass into your bed
To keep you warm these long spring nights.

"'Tis time you were a man awake,
And time the books were put aside,
'Tis time now for a sweetheart's sake
To seek a fortune far and wide.

"'Tis time you asked a lass to wed,"
He cherups with a trill and start,
"Young spindleshanks, young dozyhead,
'Tis time you were a man at heart"

26. THE DREAMER

O April made a bright ado
And laughed at me, "Take all I give,
For all I have I give to you,
Because you have not long to live."

So there I took the gifts she gave
And there she laughed and bade good-bye,
And I got tools to dig my grave,
Knowing 'twas true that I must die.

And April passed and May came on
And I had strength and dug down deep,
Thinking, "When I am dead and gone
A few may call, but I will sleep."

And as I cut the clod and clay
I came upon a dead man's bones,
And hard by these a pitcher lay,
Filled to the top with grimy stones.

Then I sat down to muse and mark
And my old purpose quite forgot,
And as I mused I saw a spark
Shine from each stone within the pot.

So with a will I scratched and shone
And made each stone shine like a star,
And ere the lovely May was gone,
To see the gems men travelled far.

And O, their praise was like strong wine,
And I drank deep, it was so sweet,
And slept and dreamed the gems were mine
And not the dead man's at my feet.

27. I THINK 'TIS DAWN

I THINK 'tis dawn, so bright the light,
So sweet the larks above the corn.
It burns along the eastern height
In rose and gold; I think 'tis dawn.

It lights, I think, an English home,
An English grange, a manor-hall,
It burns on vane and spire and dome,
Tower and town, it lights them all.

On English homes, on weal and woe,
On lands where lie the English dead.
It lights up half the world, I know,
But not the land where I must tread.

Thence none return. One treads alone,
The traveller that none can save,
The traveller in lands unknown,
The quest that ends not with the grave.

'Tis time to go. The east does burn,
The morning sky is all aglow.
One treads alone and none return,
'Tis dawn, I think, and I must go.

28. WHEN LAST I WENT

When last I went thro' marsh and mire
To Holymoor in Derbyshire,
Thro' marsh and mire and all along
The laverock sang his lovely song.

And I went musing on my way:
"Now if 'tis true what people say,
And if the laverock on the wing
Sings sweeter songs than men can sing,

"How sweet 'twould be if I could twine
Such music with these songs of mine,
How sweet to set the words I've wrung
To music no man ever sung."

And so, a-musing there and then
On all the music made by men,
"There's none," I said, "the whole world thro'
Shall do the things that I will do."

And I went down to Holymoor
To make songs never heard before,
To sing for love there all day long
Songs sweeter than the laverock's song.

But there, for all my loving pain,
Try as I would, my songs were vain,
And tho' I sang with all my skill
The laverock sang sweeter still.

O, tho' I sang with all my might
The laverock outsang me quite,
Try as I would, I could not sing
The songs of that sweet singing thing.

29. UPON THE MOORS

Upon the moors, past Horsleygate,
I heard the mavis call his mate.
Merrily he piped his score
As tho' he had not loved before;
But as I stood to hear him prate
He eyed me down and sang no more.

It is so with each singing thing,
They hear the foot and will not sing.
But as I stepped beside the mere
He sang again unto his dear.
And as I trod by fall and spring
Clearly his song rang in my ear.

"O sweet," he sang, "to take a bride
And rest with her at eventide,
Sweet to sit with a lovely mate
And sing for her early and late."
And "—sweet—sweet—sweet" the larks replied,
As I strode down to Horsleygate.

30. THEY BADE ME GO

They bade me go about my quest
While I was young and had the mind,
So I trod far from home and rest
To find the land that none can find.

O, folk would pass the time of day
And wish me well and nod to me,
But when I smiled and asked the way
They bade me look and I should see.

To east I looked and saw the light,
To west I looked and light was there,
But east or west, search as I might,
There was no token anywhere.

But all comes right to him who waits,
To him whose eyes have seen the light,
His endless griefs and endless hates,
His doubts and longings, all come right.

So here I'll watch the weary day,
And ere the light fades in the west
A one will come to tell the way
And friend me on my lonely quest.

31. THE LAD I LOVED

The lad I loved was sprightly,
His eyes were soft and clear,
He stepped beside me lightly
When hawthorn-time was here.

And love becomes unruly
When young men step beside,
When hawthorn-time tells truly
'Twill soon be Whitsuntide.

For Whitsun means a wedding
And wedding means delight,
A lad beside one treading
And all the world in white.

And my lad was so charming,
His eyes so soft and gay,
His laughter so disarming,
I could not say him nay.

For hawthorn-time comes yearly
But love none can recall,
And loving him so dearly
I gave my heart and all.

And Whitsun found me willing,
  But it was not to be,
For my lad took the shilling
  And sailed across the sea.

And now when Whitsun's nighing
  And hawthorn-bloom is strown,
I hark to no lad's sighing
  And I walk out alone.

32. OLD ATHENS

Old Athens stood beside the seas,
And there, folk say, were courts and schools,
And there, I hear, lived Socrates,
Who tried to make wise men from fools.

His father carved in stone and gold,
His mother helped when wives gave birth,
His wife, Xanthippe, was a scold,
And he the wisest man on earth.

In mart and workshop he would preach
And show the Greeks what men should be,
And princes came to hear him teach,
And dukes and lords, so wise was he.

And strange it is, but all too true,
That when a wise man speaks his mind,
Fools fear the harm his tongue may do
And banish him from all mankind.

And so it was with Socrates;
He spoke his mind to Grecian youth;
And every fool he could not please
Belittled him for speaking truth.

And since 'tis wrong to preach the right
And sages will not mend their ways,
And fools will jail a man for spite,
So he was jailed for thirty days.

And he was tried in Athens state,
And, scorning help, without demur,
Faced the court and heard his fate,
And mocked them for the fools they were.

And when the thirty days were done
They gave him hemlock for his pride,
And, undisturbed, afraid of none,
So Socrates of Athens died.

And strange it is, tho' all too true,
That when wise men say what they think,
Fools fear the good their tongues will do
And give them hemlock-wine to drink.

33. BETWEEN THE DERWENT

Between the Derwent and the Dove
'Tis said young men are hard to catch,
Young men, they say, are quick to love,
But slow to make a proper match.

'Tween Derwent and the Dove there lies
—But miles from Trent—Hope-in-the-Leas,
And there the maids have tender eyes,
And there the youths are hard to please.

And there, in Hope, the running-track
—When summer comes—is sweet with may,
And there the lads run miles and back,
And there the maidens line the way.

The starter calls, the lads stand taut,
The pistol cracks, the lads they go,
And clean ahead and swift as thought
Flashes the lad I used to know.

"Oh, he's the one I would were mine";
And "He's the darling I have chose";
"Oh, how he left the starting-line!"
And so the maidens' chatter goes.

And they, with all their love and grace,
And I, and all his kith and kin,
Were soon to watch him take his place
To run the race he would not win.

Old Harper's Lil was young and fair,
Her lips were ripe, she had no man,
The lad I knew went wooing there,
And so the foregone race began.

She would—she would not, and she may,
She'd think of it, she'd not be guiled.
To-morrow then and not to-day,
To-morrow: till the lad was wild.

His breath came fast, his lips were dry,
His heart was knocking at his side.
" My Lil," he said, " I'm like to die."
The runner faltered in his stride.

" My dear, I'm like to die, I know ";
And still she laughed and led him on.
" My Lil, my dear, I love you so."
The runner's breath had all but gone.

" Oh, will you sit beside me here
And say a kind word to your friend?
Come, let me stroke your hair, my dear."
And so the race drew to an end.

For she was there when morning came,
Her eyes were closed, her hands were crossed,
She moved not when they spoke her name.
The race was run; the lad had lost.

He'd looked his last upon the sun.
Eye for an eye: he'd run no more.
Life for a life: his day was done.
They led him from his father's door.

And so they die that kill for love.
And only reap the seed they sow.
And far from Derwent, far from Dove,
Lies the lad I used to know.

34. PROEM

They droop and fade that were so fair,
They droop and die, their day is done.
They hang and wither in my hair,
—The laurels my poor rhymes have won.

They droop, and many a mocker says,
"See what the fool got for his pain."
And there they hang, the faded bays,
Never to blow or bloom again.

'Tis long, I think, if truth were told,
Since laurels blew on Helicon,
The hillside there is bare and cold,
The daughters of old Zeus are gone.

He had nine girls, that Grecian god,
To weave the laurels all day thro',
And there on Helicon they trod,
The queens of all the tasks men do.

There on the hills the bays they'd twine
To crown the beauty made by men,
And every man swore by those nine,
And laurels were worth winning then.

But Zeus the god fled long ago
And took his daughters none know where,
And now men's hearts are filled with woe,
And Helicon stands cold and bare.

And little joy is left alive,
And beauty's scarce in these sad times,
So all the long day thro' I strive
To comfort men with my poor rhymes.

35. HOW SICK I GROW

How sick I grow to hear folk lie,
How sick to see their bitter strife;
I think there's none so sick as I,
For I grow weary of my life.

'Tis no use flying—'twould be there,
'Twould follow me: flight cannot save.
'Tis no use grieving—'tis my share,
'Twill go with me unto my grave.

O, when I leave for once and all
May others serve the light I tend,
May others hear the trumpet call
To meet the ills that never end.

O they, like me, must march alone
And bear the burden I have borne,
They'll know the longings I have known,
Be sick at heart and all forlorn.

And they, I know, will doubt and stand,
And maybe falter—turn to flee.
I cannot tell. Maybe at hand
There waits a day I shall not see.

But grant I lie awake to hark
And hear the tidings of the quest,
And learn 'tis well ere in the dark
I turn to deep, eternal rest.

36. DRINKING

Long since I learnt my drinking,
And I drink still.
Quaffing to ease my thinking,
To cure my ill.
Hearken. I have been drinking
And got my fill.

Bibbing. Bibbing with brave men,
All knee by knee.
Fellows I never met till then,
Strangers to me.
Fellows I'll never meet agen,
Brave men and free.

Fellows travelling along
Over the earth.
Fellows that could do no wrong,
Princes by birth.
Princes of wisdom and song,
Princes of mirth.

Princes gay all singing by
Unto the grave.
Princes, and so young to die,
So clean, so brave.
Princes that I drank with—I,
And could not save.

37. IN A DERBYSHIRE GARDEN

The apple here its blossom spills
And bravely stand the hollyhocks,
And here all day the throstle trills,
And here all day the chaffinch mocks.

The bloom about the hawthorn spreads,
The daisies eye the pimpernels,
The primroses lift up their heads
And hearken as the chaffinch tells:

"He that knows most has least to say,
He that knows least lets naught a-be,
He that has most gives least away,
He that has least is light and free."

"He that has nothing fears no ill,"
Chirp the tits in the lilac-bush;
"O, he is happy," the linnets trill;
"He has no care," pipes up the thrush.

And whistling wrens say 'tis right,
And sparrows chirr under the eaves,
And larks sing on lost in the light,
And finches sing in the chestnut-leaves.

38. ONCE WHEN FOR ME

Once when for me an ill wind blew
And folks were heartless and unjust,
I used to have a friend or two
When ill winds blew—whom I could trust.

But that, 'tis true, was long ago,
For, friends or no, their stay is brief,
And now to-day when ill winds blow
I have no friend to share my grief.

But I'll trudge on—'twill soon be past,
'Tis but a fancy born of dust.
This grief I feel, it cannot last,
'Tis sure to end, as end it must.

Long since in ancient Nazareth
One bore a greater grief than mine,
A grief that led him to his death,
That Nazarene, in Palestine.

His was a grief he could not mend,
An ill that none could understand,
But brave he bore it to the end,
And he sleeps sound in that far land.

And if I go the road he went,
That bore his burden long 'fore me,
Altho' 'tis vain, the life he spent,
I'll sleep as deep and sound as he.

39. HADY HILL

My love she lived at Calow
And I lived down below,
And when the fit came on me
To Calow I would go.

And I would stand and whistle
Hard by the three lane-ends,
And she would hark and hear me
And leave her whilom friends.

Long in the fields we'd tarry
And long upon the green,
And talk of when we'd marry
And all the things we'd seen.

Now I never go to Calow,
Tho' I went oft before,
And she that lived at Calow—
O she lives there no more.

I never go to Calow,
Tho' Calow stands there still,
For the weary road to Calow
It lies up Hady Hill.

And there are gates on Hady
  That open stand to all,
And there 'tis cool and shady
  And there no sound does fall.

And there the folk lie easy,
  And there my love does lie,
She goes no more to Calow
  And not to Calow I.

40. THE SON OF MAN

Matthew and Mark and Luke and John
Say God was good to look upon.
He bringeth light into the dark,
He bringeth balm for sin and cark.
So said Matthew and Luke and John,
And so said that apostle, Mark.

I do not doubt a word they said,
But I'm alive and they are dead.
I am alive, and Luke and John,
Matthew and Mark—all are gone.
They have no call to earn their bread,
This Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and John.

There was a town—Jerusalem,
And a village callèd Bethlehem,
And up beside a land-locked sea
A little place called Galilee.
And here were gods, and one of them,
Or so they said, did die for me.

So says Matthew, Luke and John,
And so says Mark, the other one.
But I, who was not there to see,
I cannot think how it should be.
And Luke and John and Mark are gone,
And scribing Matthew, so is he.

I doubt not they had thoughts like mine,
And liked the girls and loved the wine.
I doubt not once they wasted breath—
As I do here—in Nazareth.
Nor doubt they thought their God divine
By that long lake, Gennesareth.

By Jericho or Babylon
Sleep Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and John.
Or maybe in Gethsemane
Or Magdala or Bethany.
Where'er it be—in Gibbethon—
I know they sleep, nor think of me.

I know they sleep, nor think of God,
Nor think of me beneath his rod.
They sleep so sound and fancy-free
They do not know how God hurts me.
O never now they think of God,
Never now of God or me.

O Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and John,
How wearily I travel on.
O when shall I be up and free
Of this sad load you left to me?
Hard is the bed I lie upon,
Hard as the rocks on Calvary.

41. THE MURDER

The cock crowed once and the cock crowed twice
And Pilate he fingered his toga's hem,
The grey dawn broke and the cock crowed thrice,
And "Why do ye kill him?" I said to them.

The hot sun rose and the little flies
Crawled over his face and his naked breast,
I saw the look in his tortured eyes,
And the cock crowed as it would never rest.

Yea, the cock crowed on in the morning mists
And I saw sharp thorns in the drooping head,
I saw the blood on the thin, brown wrists,
And "Alas, ye are fools—poor fools," I said.

"O fools, what harm hath this sad man done?"
The Pharisees nodded at purblind Jews,
The bleary-eyed Jews blinked up at the sun,
And the cock shrilled high with his doodle-oos.

I said, "Come, tell me the sin he bore!"
And each man gaped at his fellow-men,
And a woman stood forth who was a whore,
A beautiful woman, a Magdalen,

THE MURDER

A lovely woman, shapely of limb,
And crying, " The man carries heaven's keys
But sells not for gold, so they murder him,
And woe unto them, for Jehovah sees.

" Woe unto them! " And her hair was black.
And the cock crowed on and he would not tire;
" Woe! " the dead man's mother sobbed back;
" Yea, eternal woe! " groaned his weeping sire.

And "a-doodle-oo" came back to mock,
And "a-doodle-oo" from the temple-wall.
"A-doodle-oo," sang the crowing cock,
And a mist came over mine eyes and all.

42. HEIGH-HO AND FIE

She said, " I will not tell a lie
Tho' all my hair turn grey and dead.
Tho' my firm breasts do hang awry
And sour the milk and then run dry,
I will not tell a lie," she said.

"And if I was to sigh and swear
That I would love you till I die,
And to no other's bed repair,
And none but you to comb my hair—
O lad," she said, " 'twould be a lie."

He said, " Heigh-ho, 'tis lies, I trow,
That keep your eyes a-shining so;
'Tis lies that get you woo'd and wed
And lies that put you safe to bed.
I'll up and go, my lass—heigh-ho,
Heigh-ho for love—heigh-ho," he said.

" I'll go for ever—I'll come back never,
I'll find somewhere among the shires,
A place where none, not even one,
Does mouth of love and lives undone.
Sick am I of all endeavour,
Sick of love and lies and liars."

HEIGH-HO AND FIE

" O fie," she laughed at him, " O fie,
O fie, my lad, I love you well."
"Ay, change your tune," he made reply;
" For all I know you do but lie,
And when have lies that lasses tell
Ever saved a lad from hell?

" I've done with you and yours for good,
I care not tho' I live or die."
He turned and hurried thro' the wood,
He looked not back where she still stood
Whispering, " Fie, young man, O fie."

43. I CAME UPON HER

I CAME upon her in the street,
A laughing maiden, sweet to see.
I came upon her in the street
And archly there she glanced at me.
Her eyes, half hid by blowing hair,
Were calling, laughing, fain to greet
A stranger who could only stare.
Lackaday, but she was fair.

O lackaday, those glances sweet!
Are those glances less than naught?
O lackaday, but when we meet
Many a shy glance have I caught—
Many a sly glance have I caught.

44. ONE SUMMER'S MORNING

Sweeter far than a silvery sigh,
Sweeter than larks laugh high in the sky,
Softer than wind among the wheat
I heard them laughing along the street;
I thought no fellow, howe'er he try,
Could laugh so softly, so silver-sweet.

I thought no maiden has laughed like that
No matter the game that she was at.
Tho' one for her sake bent many a shaft,
Never a maid like that has laughed;
Nay, tho' a prince at her proud side sat
And she saw the love of her drive him daft;

And saw a passion his sad face mar,
The health in his eyes wax faint and far,
His cheeks go thin and his hot breath hiss
For her lovely self, her white, warm bliss.
Nay, all for love tho' all maidens are,
Not for love could they laugh like this.

And I arose from the window-seat
And saw three youths in the sunny street.
Each had a tunic, golden-laced,
And each a girdle about his waist.
Each laughed softly and silver-sweet,
And by my window each made great haste.

ONE SUMMER'S MORNING

I cast my volume upon the floor,
I drew the bolts and threw wide the door,
I darted under the low roof-rafter
That softly echoed the youths' sweet laughter.
On they went and trod far before,
On they went, O, and I went after.

Under a white, latticed portico
There were three maids sat all in a row,
They made bright eyes and 'gan softly cry
And beckoned the youths to draw a-nigh.
They dangled favours and curtseyed low
And made bright eyes—but the youths sped by.

And the three fair maids, all milky-skinned,
Turned to each other and blushed and grinned.
Each shook her kirtle and spread her fan
And eyed me as cold as a maiden can.
And the youths' laughter came down the wind.
Low and alluring, and on I ran.

Over the dykes in the market-place,
Between the houses and on apace.
Over the steps at the school-house door;
Past the busy old chandler's store.
Then round the tall steeple went the chase,
I behind and the youths before.

I behind and the youths ahead,
And sweet their laughter and fast they sped,

ONE SUMMER'S MORNING

Past the steeple and down the hill,
Over the green and by the mill.
Up to the city gates they led,
Into the highway, onward still.

Alas, if a youth a naiad sees,
Swiftly he follows—but swiftly she flees.
Ah, tho' he run with the speed of nine,
She flits before, white and divine.
Alas, a weakness cumbers his knees,
And alas, a weakness cumbered mine.

Headlong I fell in the tender grass
And the three sped on—alas, alas;
Never they stayed in their merry flight,
And it seemed their laughter mocked my plight.
Into the forest I watched them pass,
Under an oak and out of sight.

Under an oak ere I could bawl,
Out of sight and far beyond call.
Nothing moved—no bud nor bird,
No thorn or blossom—naught I heard.
Nothing moved—nay, naught at all,
No leaf or flower. Nothing stirred.

45. THE TRYST: AN IDYLL

Corn and apples and berries o' morn,
Apples and berries and bristly corn.
Many a pomeroy hangs i' the wind,
And many a grape and tamarind,
Many a plum, all purple and fawn,
Many an orange, golden-skinned.

Lemons shine down the sunlit valleys,
The wind with the cloves spins and dallies.
Softly it strikes the cherry-tree tops,
And into the grass the cherry drops.
Then from at hand a maiden sallies
Picking the fruit—but anon she stops.

Anon she stops and anon she stands,
Dozens of cherries linked in her hands.
She stares atween the applies and plums
And over the corn, but no one comes.
There is no sound but the surf on the sands
And the bee that over her basket hums.

Sweet is the anise about the spot
And sweet the basil, but she heeds not.

THE TRYST: AN IDYLL

Dreamily sighs the wind in the trees,
Dreamily the thyme brushes her knees.
A-dreamily swings the apricot—
But she stares yonder—she heeds not these.

Under the cherry- and damson-tree,
Under the apple-john wild and wee,
Under prickle and briar and burr
The peachy lady's-thumbs sigh and stir.
Under the cherry sighing for glee,
Under the damson, under the fir.

Atween the currants and hollyhocks,
Atween the sage and the lady-smocks,
Atween the bracken and down along,
There comes a one so tall and strong.
He speeds atween the thistle and box,
Atween the bluebell and jonquil throng.

He draws a-nigh and he fords the stream,
He plashes thro' and his dark eyes gleam.
The water drips from each silky thigh,
And the willows shiver as he leaps by.
He speeds along and his wet thighs steam;
He climbs the hill and he draws a-nigh.

Ah, a blush wells up from her ruddy paps,
Beats up and over her cheeks and laps

Gladly and madly from brow to chin,
And light and bright like the almandine.
Yea, scarlet 'tween breasts and lips it daps,
Scarlet and sweet as the jessamine.

She stands a-swaying—her grey eyes shine,
He brushes swiftly under the vine.
The cherries drop from her finger-tips,
She straightens the gown about her hips.
And under the cherry and wild woodbine
A greeting falls from her lovely lips.

46. HOLIDAY

Laden with their joys and ills,
Down from the hamlets in the hills
Lusty youths do frisk and leap:
Idle stand the mines and mills.

Free, tho' with many a frown,
Many a lad does wear his crown;
Gaily, and with pretty pride,
Each lass sports her newest gown;
And faces throng the dusty town.

Merrily the night's begun;
Opening inns fill with fun—
Joyous folk and rose-lipt girls—
And lads whose weekly work is done.

Thewy youths who love the cup,
Miners, navvies, beggar-men—
The chesty fellows laugh and sup,
Breathe, and drain the liquor up,
Lords of kindly night again.

47. SADNESS

Christ, but this suffering makes me sing,
And singing eases my suffering.
Sad is the song for sadness's sake,
But it eases a heart that else would break.
Sad it is; ah, there is no thing
Half so sad as the songs I make.

Nay, when a maid sees fruit of her heart
Trampled down in the windy mart,
And when, perforce, she lies as a whore
Busier far than heretofore,
Sickness and sorrow within her smart:
But not as mine shall her heart be sore.

Not like me, tho' her love go cheap,
Shall she sicken to death, glad to sleep.
Nay, tho' she strut for all men to see,
Painted and powdered and whoring, she,
Not like me shall she fail and weep
And sicken to death. Nay, not like me.

48. THE ROSE

Oh, dark's the path that we must tread
And leads where others have been led,
And marching on as march we must
I fear we march to join the dead,
To share with them the couch of dust.

And oh, I fear 'tis all in vain,
Our labour and our loving pain.
Try as we may, 'twill be undone,
And nothing of it will remain;
No mark of it, no word, not one.

And yet, this year, beneath the thorn,
The last year's rose again is born.
It blows and nods and blushes red
And wears hues it has always worn.
It did but sleep, it was not dead.

'Twas only hidden from the eye,
It lives again now spring's gone by.
It lives and has the old, sweet grace,
It was not dead, it cannot die,
It did but sleep a little space.

And maybe, we that travel on,
We, too, shall sleep and wake anon.
And tho' 'tis dark, the road we tread,
'Tis but the road that all have gone,
And oh, there's nothing there to dread.

49. ANNIE

I THINK a raven on a hill
Hears me sighing as I stride,
And, spying me, he stands stockstill,
And hollas down the steep hillside:

"Yon's the lad that loves a maid
And dare not speak and tell her true,
Yon's the one that's all afraid,
The lad that loves and dare not woo.

"See him as he loiters by,
The lad that loves and dare not speak.
See the sunken, longing eye,
The hanging head and hollow cheek."

—But ere he's said his mocking say
I know 'tis only truth he cries,
And I turn listless on my way,
The lad that wastes his life with sighs.

50. THE MAN

The night, long since, when I was got,
My mother's blood ran strong and hot.
My dad, afire in heart and thews,
Did not stay to think and muse
If I should be a man or not.

My mother and my dad to-day
In endless night are hid away.
They cannot see this son of theirs
Nor know how fortune with him fares.
Down in the grave they sleep for aye.

They lie at ease, their debt is paid,
They have no cause to be afraid.
There, in the still, eternal night,
They lie together, hid from sight;
And here am I, the man they made.

51. ROUND THE CHURCH

Round the church I pass to-night
Many a ghoul lurks out of sight.
Busy at their evil work,
In between the graves they lurk,
On the left hand, on the right.

And, howe'er I hide my head,
I'll see them digging up the dead;
See them in between the stones
Digging up the dead men's bones—
And my blood will freeze with dread.

And I know I'll stand and peer
Sick with what I'll see and hear;
And I'll feel my tongue go dumb
And my flesh turn cold and numb,
And stand there helpless, stiff with fear.

52. A SONG FOR CHESTERFIELD

Come in from Heath and Pilsley
And come ye in from Clowne,
From Brimington and Calow—
From Baslow and from Barlow—
From Wadshelf come ye down
And hasten into town.

Here, no tired man passes;
Here the young man stays
And sports with pretty lasses,
And floods the shining glasses
With golden wine that plays
About the wintry days.

O bliss all men desire
Sour fruit of youth t' assuage;
Dear follies youthful ire
Doth leap with blood and fire;
But men turn sick and sage
And don the guise of age.

Ah, a time when youth's a-winging,
A time when lights grow dim
And troubled thoughts and stinging
See ghostly hands close-clinging
Below the glass's rim,
And dead lips at the brim.—

A SONG FOR CHESTERFIELD

Hear lasses' voices sighing
Above the busy clang,
From the guts o' death replying
Hear dead lads faintly crying
Songs that erst had rang
Sweetest lad e'er sang.

But the old songs go not leaping
The wide echoes to awake,
A bitter harvest reaping
They lie with dead lads, steeping
Their barbs in rue and ache,
Soil o' the heart to rake.

O, youth's the time for drinking!
New blood does run and leap.
Age drinks to soothe the sinking
Of feet in snowy thinking;
Youth has not time to weep
For age that sighs for sleep.

With lightfoot lads beside you
And faint lights far-revealed,
Step out and singing stride you,
The crooked spire will guide you
Thro' windy moor and weald
To busy Chesterfield.

Made At The
Temple Press
Letchworth
In
Great Britain

Date Due

SEP 05 '95

PRINTED IN U. S. A.

PELLETIER LIBRARY, ALLEGHENY COLLEGE
3 3768 00553 4634

WITHDRAWN

114515
821
B632p